

# **The Biblical Prophets' Teachings on the Love of God in Social Justice**

**Published: Oct 17, 2018**

The prophets in Biblical times focused on admonishing and urging God's people to righteousness, foretelling events if they repented or would not, and championing the cause of social justice. Prophets are deeply concerned with social justice because it reflects something more profound: the spiritual and heart condition of the people. Also, Yahweh, the God whom they served, is a stalwart defender of justice who loathed unrighteousness, corruption, and neglect of the destitute. In the inventory of blessings and curses in the Bible, God promised to judge Israel based on their fidelity to Him and their treatment of their fellow men. God proclaims himself as the God of hesed, as "And the LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" Exodus 34:6. This declaration falls in line with Him benevolent character yet Yahweh is not slack in performing justice, since "Vengeance is (His), (He) will repay" (Romans 12:19).

Prophets were emphatic about money's influence to corrupt the rich. The Pentateuch is replete with commands to feed the poor, help the widowed and fatherless, and clothe the naked. Several allusions in the Bible are found where God is described as the Just One (Acts 7:52). Even Christ's parables and declarations dwell on the theme of God as the righteous Judge and the ultimate Dispenser of Justice. God believes in and incarnates truth, impartiality, and righteous judgment; hence as God's messengers and representatives on earth, the prophets' duty consisted in preaching and acting for social justice. Money-loving prophets are as much as an oxymoron as an evil saint; nevertheless, whenever God's wrath was poured out on that number, it fell quick and stiff. Balaam and Gehazi are two such prophets who misused the prophetic gift, commercializing it for profit. Since the love of money is the root of all evil, justice was perjured and prostituted in their hands.

During the periods of Hebrew apostasy and failing, apart from the neglect of religious observances, social justice is always seriously affected. Social justice covers not only the legal domain but also the institutions of slavery, commerce, work, and family. Seeing that the Hebrews were once a people who were themselves enslaved, they were supposed to be the beacons of justice on earth and champions of rectitude.

Jesus, the Prophet of all prophets and the paragon prophet, in his ministry frequently decries the religious rulers who exploited the poor for self-aggrandizement. The message of salvation, the most important theme that is discussed in the Bible, zooms in on the Savior's rectifying wrongs and ridding mankind of sin (the root of social injustice). Prophets are the harbingers of judgment. Before judgment falls, it behooves the prophets to war the people against social injustice in hope that they would repent from their ways and turn the tide from the evil to fall against the nation. Not only loving and obeying God, but also showing mercy and loving one's neighbor constituted the fulfillment of the law. Justice is inextricably knit with the law and God's law is unbending and at the seat of his kingdom (Exodus 25:16). One would often hear about the Word of God being described as the Law and the Prophets. This designation for the sacred word also encapsulates the meaning of social justice for it ties in with abiding by the law and obedience to the commandments.

By sticking to the principles of social justice, Yahweh is pleased and blessing flow to Israel. The God represents himself as the God of the poor and the fatherless, "shewing mercy unto thousands" (Exodus 20:6). It is the blessing of God's children that they can trust and depend on the righteousness of a loving God and His call to accept His unmerited kindness.

Social justice stood as a standard against man's nature to violate laws and to corrupt good judgment. The scales of justice must be always in equilibrium and carefully weighed in favour of justice, and the executor of justice blind to color, creed, and

credentials. Isaiah 33:15 speaks of the one who lives according to the moral codes of social justice: the individual who “walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood.” Also in the judicial system, bribery was common and the poor were oppressed (Amos 5:12; Micah 3:11; Luke 18:1-8). However, God was the champion of justice in these times when He rose up prophets and judges to act on His behalf. Retribution was executed through the penal system where the convict faces stoning, stripes, or excommunication from the camp.

In sum, God's justice is always mingled with mercy therefore in social justice the love of God is always outlined; thus the agape love aspect of God's character reaches out and invites the sinner to return to the Judge and Father of all. Because of the irreversibility of the God's law and the margin of human error in the deliberation and determination of the verdicts, God himself through the clergy is summoned to give judgment in deciding a case. Prophets had the responsibility to remind the people of the law and when overtaken in sin, they were reminded of his love so that they would not lose hope and be overwhelmed by guilt.